

Module C, Section 1 Activity

Circle of Support

Think about the planning team(s)/meetings you have attended. Next answer the following questions.

1. What is the main purpose for the planning meetings you have attended over the past six months?
2. List the roles of the people who are generally present at these meetings.
3. Where do these meetings usually take place?
4. How often does planning happen around the individual(s) with whom planning is being done?
5. Who calls the meeting and what is the motivating reason(s)?
6. Why do the people who attend these meetings go?
7. What are the roles of the members and are these roles fixed within specific boundaries or are they flexible?
8. What can participants expect at the end of these planning meetings? What product or outcome?
9. What is the role of the human service worker at these meetings?
10. What is the role of community members at these meetings?
11. What is the role of the focus person at these meetings?

After you have answered the questions review the table developed by Dr. Beth Mount found below. There are three types of teams, identified by their characteristics that are used for the purposes of planning with people. Compare your answers to the characteristics represented in the table to get a sense of the type and style of planning you are typically engaged in.

TRADITIONAL PLANNING	PERSON-CENTERED TEAMS	CIRCLE OF SUPPORT
Purpose of the Planning Meeting:		
To coordinate services across disciplinary lines. To clarify staff roles in the implementation of programs.	To establish a common vision for all staff. To identify focus for organizational change.	To establish and support a personal vision for an individual. To build community support and action on behalf of the person.
Composition of the Team:		
Professionals and specialists.	Professionals and direct service workers. May include focus person and family.	Focus person, communication ally, family, friends, associates. May include some human service workers.
Where does the group meet?		
Conference room in a human service agency or similar setting: centralized site.	Human service setting close to direct service workers; decentralized site.	Community setting: places close to where circle members live.

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How often does the group meet?		
Once a year with quarterly reviews.	Major investment in initial sessions. Quarterly or monthly reviews.	Every 4-6 weeks, with subcommittee meetings in between for on-going work.
Who calls the meeting and for what purpose?		
Team leader calls the meeting to meet regulatory requirements.	Organizational change agent initiates to find new directions for organization.	Focus person and/or his or her communication ally to reach goals they are unable to accomplish alone.
Why do people who attend the meetings go?		
It's their job. It's required. Interest in coordinating department units.	There is interest in organizational/service innovation and finding new options for focus person.	There is interest and voluntary commitment to helping someone they know and care about.
What are the roles of the members of the meeting?		
Specific roles and clear boundaries. Members act within clear channels.	Roles may be changed or new roles created. Old boundaries may be challenged, new channels created.	Roles change constantly based on tasks and circumstances. Informal networks open doors to community.
Image of the Future:		
Goals fit existing program options.	Goals reflect new program models and options to be developed.	Vision of a desired future as expressed by the focus person.
Product or Outcome:		
Completed forms and paperwork.	An agenda for organizational change. Shared understanding for new direction.	Commitments to action by community members. Significant improvement in the life of the focus person.
Role of human service worker:		
Set the direction. Organize all of the activity. Coordinate activities.	Mediate interest of service providers and focus person. Lead organizational change efforts. Listen to direct service workers.	Support directions defined by group. Increase knowledge of available resources. Provide direct services to the focus person.

TRADITIONAL PLANNING	PERSON-CENTERED TEAMS	CIRCLE OF SUPPORT
Role of community members:		
Not involved in the process.	May help to implement some of the ideas.	Generate and implement plan and action steps.
Role of the focus person:		
Compliance.	Cooperate in the development of the plan.	Direct the plan and all of its activities.

Table adapted from One Candle Power (1993), pp 65-67